

S. 655, which is similar to the bipartisan measure I coauthored with Senator Ford during the last Congress, adopts a distinct flood vehicle category and improves upon the definition initially proposed by the task force.

Mr. President, I am sure my colleagues are aware that the State of Illinois, which initially adopted the task force's recommended flood definition, subsequently revised it based on anti-consumer results. Illinois found that branding "any vehicle that has been submerged in water to the point that rising water has reached over the door sill or has entered the passenger or truck compartment" caused too many vehicles to be unnecessarily branded as "flood" vehicles. Vehicles that were significantly devalued and lost their manufacturers warranty when the only damage the vehicle suffered was wet carpets or wet floor mats.

S. 655 is a good example of the need to balance competing consumer interests when establishing uniform titling definitions. Instead of unnecessarily and inappropriately branding vehicles with mere cosmetic damage, this legislation rightly brands as "flood" those vehicles which sustain water damage that impairs a car or truck's electrical, mechanical, or computerized functions. It also requires the "flood" designation for vehicles acquired by an insurer as part of a water damage settlement. This measure also includes an independent flood inspection as recommended by a working group of the National Association of Attorney's General.

Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to heed the call of used-car buyers and provide them with a reasonable and workable title branding measure. One that includes all of the minimal definitions needed to protect them from title fraud and automobile theft.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, May 19, 1999, the federal debt stood at \$5,593,797,968,334.37 (Five trillion, five hundred ninety-three billion, seven hundred ninety-seven million, nine hundred sixty-eight thousand, three hundred thirty-four dollars and thirty-seven cents).

Five years ago, May 19, 1994, the federal debt stood at \$4,588,987,000,000 (Four trillion, five hundred eighty-eight billion, nine hundred eighty-seven million).

Ten years ago, May 19, 1989, the federal debt stood at \$2,780,326,000,000 (Two trillion, seven hundred eighty billion, three hundred twenty-six million) which reflects a doubling of the debt—an increase of almost \$3 trillion—\$2,813,471,968,334.37 (Two trillion, eight hundred thirteen billion, four hundred seventy-one million, nine hundred sixty-eight thousand, three hundred

thirty-four dollars and thirty-seven cents) during the past 10 years.

NATIONAL MARITIME DAY

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to recognize that today is National Maritime Day, when the Nation pays tribute to the American Merchant Mariners who have given their lives in the service of their country. Throughout the history of the United States, our U.S.-flag Merchant Marine has always been there, providing the support that time and again has proven to be essential to victory. It is with the most profound gratitude for the service and sacrifice of America's Merchant Marine veterans that we reflect upon the importance of our U.S.-flag fleet on this day.

On April 29, 1999, I was privileged to be given a very special memento by a group of Merchant Marine Veterans of World War II. It was a patch, of the kind worn by Merchant Mariners during World War II, and it was designed in 1944 by Walt Disney Studios. Walt Disney's people created a mascot for the Merchant Marine, called "Battlin' Pete," and the patch shows Pete knocking out an Axis torpedo.

The presentation was made to express the veterans' gratitude for a very important piece of legislation that the Senate passed last year. Last year's veterans' benefits bill ensures that those American Merchant Marine veterans who served our country in World War II between August 16, 1945—the day that hostilities were officially declared at an end by President Truman—and December 31, 1946—the cut-off day for World War II service for all other service branches—receive honorable discharges for their service and are eligible for veterans' burial and cemetery benefits. This is the least we can do for these deserving veterans. I was privileged to introduce legislation during the 105th Congress seeking that change, and it was later incorporated into the veterans' benefits bill.

The overwhelming majority of World War II Merchant Mariners were previously awarded veterans status. Now, those who served in harm's way through the war's final days are also being recognized. Although Japan officially surrendered in August of 1945, harbors in Japan, Germany, Italy, France—indeed, across the world—still were mined. Twenty-two U.S.-government-owned vessels, carrying military cargoes, were damaged or sunk by mines after V-J Day. At least four U.S. Merchant Mariners were killed and 28 injured aboard these vessels. Even as Americans at home were celebrating victory, American Merchant Mariners carried on as they have always done—bravely serving their country with pride and professionalism.

I am proud that, at that April ceremony, the first honorable discharges

for this previously forgotten group went to two Merchant Marine veterans from my home state of Mississippi: Mr. Robert Hoomes and Mr. Louis Breaux. Also, I was pleased that Mr. Joseph Katusa, National Chairman, Merchant Marine Fairness Committee, received his honorable discharge. The ceremony was attended by my good friend and colleague, Congressman BOB STUMP, Chairman, House Veterans' Affairs Committee; Mr. Rudy de Leon, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness; Admiral Jim Loy, Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard; and Mr. George Searle, National President, American Merchant Marine Veterans. I would like to thank them for participating in the ceremony and acknowledging the service of Mr. Breaux, Mr. Hoomes, and Mr. Katusa, and the role that these, and all, Merchant Marine veterans played in preserving freedom.

As we mark National Maritime Day, it is important to note that our country's Merchant Mariners continue to stand ready to serve. In fact, the leaders of the major maritime labor unions—the Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association; the International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots; the National Maritime Union of America; the American Maritime Officers; and the Seafarers International Union of North America—recently expressed their readiness to support America's military effort in the Balkans. Recent reports that Greek seamen are refusing to support that effort is a reminder of why the United States requires its own highly capable Merchant Marine.

Mr. President, I will treasure that patch of "Battlin' Pete" from the Merchant Marine Veterans of World War II. It will always remind me of the importance of National Maritime Day, and of the sacrifices that America's Merchant Mariner veterans have made in the service of their country. For those who braved the Murmansk run; for those who served through the conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf; for those who today stand ready to sail into harm's way with our Armed Forces; we salute you on this day.

EXPRESSION ON VOTES

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I regret that due to family business which took me out of the country, I was unable to cast several recorded votes during yesterday's session. While my vote would not have altered the outcome of any of the motions, I would like to express how I would have voted had I been able:

On vote No. 120, a Cloture Motion regarding the motion to proceed to consideration of S. 96, Y2K liability legislation. I would have voted "AYE." It is high time we move to consideration of this important legislation. The turn of the millennium is fast approaching and

we must work to protect our citizens and businesses against harmful litigation that benefits no one.

On vote No. 121, amendment numbered 351 to S. 254 offered by Senator ALLARD regarding memorials in public schools, I would have voted "AYE." This amendment will allow students and faculty members to grieve for classmates and colleagues killed on school property in a way that makes them most comfortable.

On vote No. 122, an amendment numbered 352 to S. 254 offered by Senators KOHL and HATCH regarding mandatory safety locks on guns, I would have voted "AYE." This amendment was an example of the importance of bipartisan compromise. The Kohl-Hatch amendment requires all handguns sold or transferred by a licensed dealer to be sold with a locking device. In addition, this amendment provides important liability protections for gun owners who use these safety devices.

On vote No. 13, an amendment numbered 353 to S. 254 offered by Senators HATCH and FEINSTEIN I would have voted "AYE." This important amendment increased penalties for participating in a crime as a gang member; makes it illegal to travel or use the mail for gang business; makes it illegal to transfer firearms to children to commit a crime; makes it illegal to clone pagers; prohibits the distribution of certain information relating to explosives or destructive devices; makes it illegal to wear body armor in the commission of a crime and donates surplus body armor to local Law enforcement agencies; and strengthens penalties for Eco-terrorism.

On vote No. 124, an amendment to S. 254 offered by Senator BYRD I would have voted "AYE." This amendment allows states to enforce their own alcoholic beverage control laws by allowing state prosecutors to bring an injunction in Federal Court if interstate shippers violate State laws.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S VISION FOR EDUCATION IN AMERICA

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, over the weekend Vice President Gore outlined his vision for American education if he becomes President. The speech was billed by the Washington Post as the Vice President's "vision for American education in the 21st Century". Unfortunately for our children, the Vice President's vision for American education in the 21st century looks a lot like the failed policies of the last 35 years.

The VP's speech laid out seven new proposals for American education—seven proposals that all say AL GORE knows more about educating children than do parents, teachers, principals, superintendents and school board members all across America. Seven proposals to add to the hundreds upon

hundreds of education programs run by the federal government, so many in fact that no one, not the Department of Education, the General Accounting Office or even the Vice President, is sure how many there are. Seven proposals that will add to a system of top down control of education that puts a higher priority on adults filling out forms correctly than on children passing a math or a spelling test.

Today, President Clinton unveiled his proposal to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Unfortunately, the President's proposal is filled with more of the "D.C. knows best" programs he has touted for the past 6½ years. For example, the President's proposal for reducing class size is filled with requirements for states and districts to comply with, but does not address the issue of children learning.

For most of this half century Washington, D.C., has been dominated by people who believe that centralized decisions and centralized control exercised by Washington, D.C., is the best way to solve problems, including those in the classroom. This approach has not worked. As Washington, D.C., has taken power and authority from local school districts, our schools have not improved. But, old habits die hard. The belief in centralized power is still very much alive, and embodied by the President's and Vice President's proposals.

I don't believe AL GORE or Bill Clinton know more about what America's schools and communities need than they do. In fact, I don't believe that I or any other member of Congress or the Administration knows more about educating children than do parents or local educators. Unfortunately, AL GORE and Bill Clinton have indicated that they will continue on the path they've trod throughout their administration—a path that begins and ends in Washington, D.C.

In 1997 I first proposed an amendment to the fiscal year Education funding bill. It was stated clearly in that amendment that I believe that those closest to our children—their parents, teachers, superintendents and school board members—are best able to make decisions about their children's education. Last year, I refined that legislation to include a "triple option" that would allow a state to decide where the federal education dollars should go. Both proposals passed this body by slim margins and were immediately met with a veto threat by the Administration.

This year, I have worked with a bipartisan coalition of members and groups to devise legislation that will allow states maximum flexibility in return for increased accountability for the academic achievement of their students. My bill, the Academic Achievement for All Act, or Straight A's, will be introduced after the Memorial Day

recess. I am hopeful that this time my colleagues in the Senate will join me in giving back to states and local communities the ability to make critical decisions about the education of their children.

This issue boils down to each Senator asking if he or she believes schools will be improved through more control from Washington, D.C., or by giving more control to parents, teachers, principals, superintendents and school board members? I believe our best hope for improving the education of our children is to put the American people in charge of their local schools.

HEALTH AND THE AMERICAN CHILD

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, yesterday I met with former Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis Sullivan, who now chairs the prestigious Public Health Policy Advisory Board (PHPAB). Dr. Sullivan presented to me their new report entitled "Health and the American Child: A Focus on the Mortality Among Children."

I was immediately struck by the fact that the findings of the PHPAB report underscore both the need for the legislation we are debating here today and the tremendous importance we must place on prevention efforts so that we can reduce unnecessary deaths of our Nation's youth.

According to "Health and the American Child," in the past two decades, two causes of child death have dramatically increased—homicide and suicide, which account for 14% and 7% respectively of all deaths for children under age 19. In teenage black males, the levels are so striking that the report uses the term "epidemic" to describe an eight-fold increase in homicide rates among African American youth, now their number one cause of death.

"Homicide and suicide, the greatest new risks to children's health today, require both heightened preventive action as well as research into children's mental health and the social fabric in which they grow and develop." And that is precisely what we have been talking about during our debate on S. 254.

The PHPAB report goes on to define the contributing risk factors associated with mortality in children. Homicide and suicide, as the major killers of our children, are most closely associated with firearms, drug and alcohol use, and motor vehicles. These significant increases in both morbidity and mortality among our youth must be addressed and demand aggressive preventive action on our part.

I commend "Health and the American Child" to my colleagues and would be glad to make it available to any Senators who care to have the benefit of its considerable findings. "Health